



**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development**

**A STUDY ON COPING MECHANISMS AND PERCEIVED STRESS  
AMONG WORKING INDIVIDUALS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC  
IN KAMPUNG MOYAN LAUT, ASAJAYA, SARAWAK**

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**Bachelor of Science with Honours  
(Human Resource Development)  
2021**

Grade: A

Please tick (✓)

Final Year Project Report

☒

Masters

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This declaration is made on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

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8<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Date submitted



Maizatul Irna binti Ismail (66554)

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AMONG WORKING INDIVIDUALS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC  
IN KAMPUNG MOYAN LAUT, ASAJAYA, SARAWAK**

MAIZATUL IRNA BINTI ISMAIL

This project is submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a  
Bachelor of Science with Honours  
(Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK  
(2020/2021)



Projek bertajuk ‘Kajian Mengenai Mekanisme Menangani dan Tanggapan Stres dalam Kalangan Individu Bekerja Semasa Pandemik COVID-19 di Kampung Moyan Laut, Asajaya, Sarawak’ telah disediakan oleh Maizatul Irna binti Ismail dan telah diserahkan kepada Fakulti Sains Kognitif dan Pembangunan Manusia sebagai memenuhi syarat untuk Ijazah Sarjana Muda Sains dengan Kepujian (Pembangunan Sumber Manusia).

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Tarikh:

8 Julai 2021  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **A STUDY ON COPING MECHANISMS AND PERCEIVED STRESS AMONG WORKING INDIVIDUALS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN KAMPUNG MOYAN LAUT, ASAJAYA, SARAWAK**

Coping mechanisms and perceived stress are very important knowledge that everyone need to know and aware especially working individuals that affected during COVID-19 pandemic. Coping mechanisms are argued as the most significant factors that influences the perceived stress among individuals. This main objective of this research is to identify coping mechanisms and perceived stress among working individuals during COVID-19 pandemic in Kampung Moyan Laut, Asajaya, Sarawak. Perceived stress becomes a concern among researchers where they need to evaluate the coping mechanisms for individuals that affected by COVID-19 pandemic especially in economic sector. A quantitative method was adopted in this study and a questionnaire was designed and distributed to the target respondents. A total of 56 respondents were recorded and their data were analyse in the findings. The findings reveal that use of emotional social support and denial are significantly related to perceived stress. It is also found that use of emotional social support is the most dominant coping mechanism that impact perceived stress. This study is important because working individuals can gain insight into what is coping mechanisms that can measure their perceived stress. The results also will help to promote what suitable coping mechanisms that can be used in measure perceived stress.

***Keywords:*** Coping Mechanisms, Perceived Stress, COVID-19 Pandemic, and Working Individuals.

## **ABSTRAK**

### **KAJIAN MENGENAI MEKANISME MENANGANI DAN TANGGAPAN STRES DALAM KALANGAN INDIVIDU BEKERJA SEMASA PANDEMIK COVID-19 DI KAMPUNG MOYAN LAUT, ASAJAYA, SARAWAK**

Mekanisme menangani dan tanggapan stres adalah pengetahuan yang sangat penting yang perlu diketahui dan disedari oleh semua orang terutamanya individu yang bekerja semasa berlakunya wabak COVID-19. Mekanisme menangani dianggap sebagai salah satu faktor yang paling penting yang mempengaruhi tekanan yang dirasakan dalam kalangan individu. Objektif utama penyelidikan ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti mekanisme mengatasi dan tekanan yang dirasakan di kalangan individu yang bekerja semasa pandemik COVID-19 di Kampung MoyanLaut, Asajaya, Sarawak. Tekanan yang dirasakan menjadi perhatian para penyelidik di mana mereka perlu menilai mekanisme menangani individu yang terkena wabak COVID-19 terutama di sektor ekonomi. Kaedah kuantitatif akan digunakan dalam kajian ini dan borang soal selidik diedarkan kepada responden sasaran. Sebanyak 56 responden direkodkan dan data mereka dianalisis dalam dapatan kajian. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan sokongan sosial emosi dan penafian berkait dengan tekanan yang dirasakan oleh individu yang bekerja. Juga didapati bahawa penggunaan sokongan sosial emosi merupakan mekanisme mengatasi yang paling dominan yang mempengaruhi tekanan yang dirasakan. Kajian ini penting kerana individu yang bekerja dapat memperoleh gambaran mengenai mekanisme penanggulangan yang dapat mengukur tekanan yang dirasakan. Hasilnya juga akan membantu mengenal pasti mekanisme menangani apa yang sesuai yang dapat digunakan untuk mengukur tekanan yang dirasakan.

Kata kunci: Mekanisme Menangani, Tanggapan stres, Pandemi COVID-19, Individu yang Bekerja.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses on background of the study, the problem statement, research objectives and hypotheses. Research framework, the importance of the study, and meaning of terms are also discussed in this chapter. Lastly, the chapter ends with a summary.

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

This research focuses on coping mechanisms: how employees and self employed cope with their perceived stress during the pandemic COVID-19 in Kampung Moyan Laut, Asajaya, Sarawak. According to World Health Organization (2020), corona viruses come from a large family of viruses which can cause dangerous germs to humans and also animals. There are several corona viruses that attack human which can cause respiratory infections that range from the common cold to disease. According to Xu (2020), all were unaware of this new virus and disease until the epidemic began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. In February 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General revealed that COVID19 was the illness caused by this new CoV, which is the same as COVID19. “Corona virus disease 2019” since the aetiology of the illness is attributed to a novel virus belonging to the corona viruses (CoV) family (Cascella, 2020). According to the WHO (2020), on 21 March2020, this virus had already reached 202 nations, with confirmed territorial cases of approximately 693, 224 and 33, 391 deaths.

Besides, to prevent the infection spreading of COVID-19, most of the countries has demonstrated leadership by implementing emergency actions. We can see that schools, university, kindergartens, museums, restaurant and other public place have been closed. Not only for public place has been closed but we can see now all the public gatherings and events

also have to be cancelled, quarantined persons, travel bans, close borders and cancelled flights to and from countries with a high level of COVID-19 risk. According to Xu (2020), after the first outbreak in December 2019 in Wuhan, the largest metropolitan area in China's Hubei Province, the virus has spread rapidly nationwide in other countries.

COVID-19 actually gives a big impact especially for economic sector. Another negative impact of this virus on people is this pandemic can lead to sharp shocks to the worldwide economics and societies (MacIntyre, 2020). According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) latest Interim Economic Outlook (2020), the spread of corona virus COVID-19 presents the global economy with more danger since financial crisis. In the first half of 2020, supply chains and commodities are hit where the tourism's sector drops (OECD, 2020). According to OECD (2020), global economic growth is seen decrease to 2.4% for the whole year than 2.9% in 2019. The situation gives a negative impact especially for employees, individual employment and also business sustainability. Based on Shigemura, Ursano and Morganstein (2020), faced with this epidemiological catastrophe, a substantial shortage of sanitizers and medical mask have presented anxiety-related behaviours from the individual. According to Corkery and Maheshwari (2020), corona virus is not only a dangerous disease that effects on physical's health's risk, but it also involves mental health of individuals.

Coping mechanisms are among of the dispositional characteristics most commonly studied, and it has been shown to be effective in modulating responses to stressful events. In an attempt to master, reduce or accept stress and conflict, coping mechanism is characterized as an effort to solve personal and interpersonal problems (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). According to Taha, Matheson and Anisman (2013), there is a research into the role of coping strategies during a virus outbreak (2009 H1N1 flu pandemic) found coping styles that affect

the perceived risk of infection and vaccination intentions among Canadian adults.

In general, perceived stress is an individual's emotions or opinions on how much stress they are under at a particular point in time or over a given period of time (Anna, 2015). Perceived stress involves feelings about one's life's uncontrollability and unpredictability, how much one has to deal with frustrating issues, how much change takes place in one's life, and faith in one's ability to deal with problems. As mentioned by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), perceived stress represents the relationship between a person and their environment that they consider to threaten or overpower their assets in a way that affects their well-being. Perceived stress is usually evaluated through a questionnaire such as the Perceived Stress Scale to find the frequency of such feelings (Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein, 1983).

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

This research highlights on the coping mechanisms on how employees can cope during the pandemic COVID-19 and perceived stress among working individuals. Coping mechanism has become a concern among researchers due to the spread of COVID-19 viruses. The COVID-19 has changed immediately how people work around the globe. Nowadays, no matter what your business, there are more questions than answers. Sometimes people do not understand what actually happen in the world. As mentioned by Shigemura, Ursano and Morganstein (2020), COVID-19 pandemic has changed how healthcare professionals work across the world in an unprecedented which trying to make true decisions and can work under extreme pressures. In fact, many research mentioned that coping mechanisms is related with job stress, employee's wellbeing, anxiety and mental health especially in COVID-19 issues.

Based on computer search results using SCOPUS Research Databases from 2015-2020 shown that the study about coping mechanisms and perceived stress which is mostly conducted in Western setting which there are 204 entries in the Academic Search Complete database. This statement proves that, there is still a lack of studies about perceived stress and coping mechanisms in Malaysia. This is one of our opportunities and chances in doing a new research area of this study. Since, there is still lack of research about coping mechanisms and perceived stress among employees during COVID-19 Pandemic especially in Sarawak, researcher as undergraduate students will take this opportunity to find new results as an output of this research. From recent study about initial impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employees and self-employed based on gender and parental status, there is a statement prove that people who are most affected by this pandemic is from working individuals either under employment or self-employed (Kalenkoski & Pabilonia, 2020).

According to Shigemura, Ursano and Morganstein (2020), the anxiety-related behaviour among individual started when people begins to use face mask and hand sanitizer everywhere they are. School is one of the places where many people converge on a regular basis. It is true that tension is expected to occur on the road as people come together. Based on the previous study, these may all lead to unpredictable or potentially stressful circumstances where the organisations are still expected to decide and act appropriately. According to Stogner (2020), in order to justify and properly target resources that allow management and officers to cope with the pandemic, it is a critical part to quantify the scope of the impact of the COVID-19. Furthermore, from past research paper, there are still gaps between factors of stress or moderating factors that not explore in the paper such as background of physical health, marital status and organization size (Salima,2020). So, in this study, researcher are trying to find coping mechanisms on how to reduce stress especially during COVID-19 pandemic.

As mentioned by Britner(2003), in a past research study, coping actually influenced on how individual handle their emotions and psychological outcomes when facing a stressful situations. There are some arguments about coping which is more negative ways of coping have been correlated with positive reinterpretation and growth. For example, it may be seen as denial or indifference to consider the optimistic side of a situation and disregard the difficult realities. As stated by Wortman (2004), there are also some debates as to whether positive reinterpretation is a tool for adaptive coping and its effect on psychosocial well-being.

As stated in Transactional Stress Theory byLazarus and Folkman, (1984), stress comes from the perception of the person of a contradiction between the environmental requirements imposed on them to cope with the resources available in a specific situation. A negative and uncomfortable psychological state of stress occurs when people look at the stressors as exceeding the coping resources, followed by exhaustion (Doerr,2015; Strahler & Luft,2019) and mood worsening. In this sense, in the Transactional Stress Theory, the central mechanism described (Lazarus &Folkman , 1984) is similar to the ways that was purposed by the General Strain Theory (GST; Agnew, 1992) which explains deviant behaviour that individuals might engage.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research objectives consist of the general objective which will show the aims and goals in conducting this research. There are nine specific objectives and one general objective to be determined in this research.

#### *1.3.1 General Objective*

The general objective of this study is;

1. To identify coping mechanisms and perceived stress among working individuals during COVID-19 pandemic.



### *1.3.2 Specific Objectives*

Specifically, the objectives of this study are;

1. To determine the differences in perceived stress among working individuals based on gender.
2. To determine the differences in perceived stress among working individuals based on age.
3. To determine the differences in perceived stress among working individuals based on marital status.
4. To evaluate the relationship between positive reinterpretation and growth and perceived stress among working individuals.
5. To evaluate the relationship between active coping and perceived stress among working individuals.
6. To evaluate the relationship between denial and perceived stress among working individuals.
7. To identify the relationship between uses of emotional social support and perceived stress among working individuals.
8. To identify the relationship between acceptance and perceived stress among working individuals.
9. To evaluate the dominant coping mechanism that impacts perceived stress among working individuals.

### **1.4 RESEARCH HYPHOTESES**

There are some hypotheses that need to be tested in this research which includes the demographic characteristics (gender, age and marital status) of working individuals and the coping mechanisms that involve in perceived stress.

Ha<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference in perceived stress among working individuals based on gender.

Ha<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant difference in perceived stress among working individuals based on age.

Ha<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant difference in perceived stress among working individuals based on marital status.

Ha<sub>4</sub>: There is a significant relationship between positive reinterpretation and growth and perceived stress among working individuals.

Ha<sub>5</sub>: There is a significant relationship between active coping and perceived stress among working individuals.

Ha<sub>6</sub>: There is a significant relationship between denial and perceived stress among working individuals.

Ha<sub>7</sub>: There is a significant relationship between use of emotional social support and perceived stress among working individuals.

Ha<sub>8</sub>: There is a significant relationship between acceptance and perceived stress among working individuals.

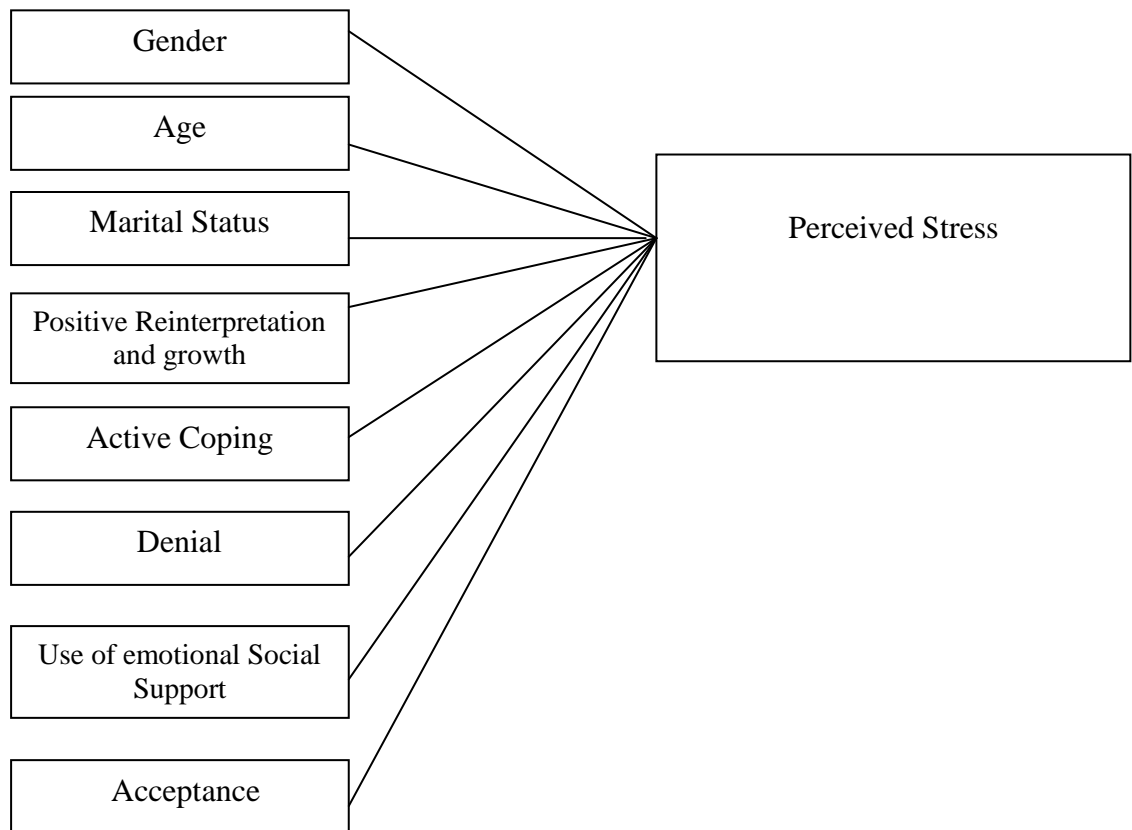
Ha<sub>9</sub>: The five independent variables will be significantly explain a high percentage of the variance of perceived stress.

## 1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this research which includes the independent variables and dependent variable is shown below.

Independent Variables

Dependent Variable



Proposed Conceptual Framework

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

The significance of this research will contribute the level of perceived stress among employees in the various sectors. This research also has been conducted to fill in the research gap as stated in the problem statement. Moreover, the findings of this study will be able to help employees to choose positive reinterpretation and growth, active coping, denial, use of emotional social support and acceptance to reduce their stress. Stress is not something that can be ignored and put aside. Giving much attention for it in the first stage is important and takes a fast action to avoid worst effect.

Furthermore, employers can take this research as a lesson on how to be more tolerate with their employees and staff. They need to understand how world are changing now. COVID-19 pandemic has make some changes the way people work. Everyone needs to follow the standard operating procedure in the workplace. Employers need to understand the situations and also be aware with employees' stress level.

Lastly, this research will be important and beneficial to other researchers who are interesting in doing research about coping mechanisms and perceived stress among employees. This research can be basic information they can gain for future research. In this study, researcher discusses and explain in details about the concepts of coping mechanisms and perceived stress especially in the crisis of COVID-19 pandemic that give impact to the highlight population. Then, the findings of this research can be a reference to other researcher to identify more relevant coping mechanisms. As a result, we know how actually working individuals can cope and their perceived stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.